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Cities of the Prairie Revisited: the Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier

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into the countryside? Can one not be impressed by the transformation of public finance in the Hawkeye state over the past half-century? Where once local property taxes paid for most of Iowa's public goods and services, officials in Des Moines now manage the most lucrative share of a much different revenue regime. Isn't this part of the American system? Iowans from Boies to Branstad would object to erasing their history from our *federal* polity.

The book contains some useful information; 148 tabular and visual displays can't all be bad. But these are flecks of gold locked in a methodological dry gulch. When a pit is veined with fool's gold, the best bet is to cast the findings onto the slag heap.

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

BALLARD C. CAMPBELL

Cities of the Prairie Revisited: The Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier, by Daniel J. Elazar et al. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. 288 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

In 1970 Daniel Elazar and his associates published *Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics*, an important study of the social and political changes in ten medium-sized metropolitan areas of the Middle West between 1945 and 1961. An outgrowth of Morton Grodzins's approach to urban development at the University of Chicago in the 1950s, the book explored urban political power in the larger context of economic and sociocultural conditions. Unlike many political scientists in the last two decades, Elazar has a broad humanistic as well as social science perspective rather than a narrow or mechanistic framework. As he notes in the present work, "It is neither possible nor desirable to study local political systems apart from the larger geo-historical, cultural, economic, and political settings" (8). The earlier volume, as well as *Cities of the Prairies Revisited*, are based on the assumption that four decisive forces shaped the American political system: the frontier, migrations of people, sectionalism, and the federal system in the United States. This latest study continues the analysis developed in the 1970 volume, but extends it to the years 1961 to 1976.

The book is divided into two major parts. The first section provides an overview of the four major influences Elazar deems as decisive. In the second section his collaborators illuminate the main themes through detailed case studies, including Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, and Joliet in Illinois, and Pueblo, Colorado.

In his overview Elazar assesses the impact of the four significant influences. He makes much of the influence of the frontier, although

he does not clearly delineate or define his use of this often nebulous term. He suggests that a rural-land frontier was a dominant determinant of American life until 1914. Sometime in the early twentieth century that phase was succeeded by an urban frontier based on industrial development. This, in turn, gave way to a third frontier stage beginning in the 1920s, which he designates as a metropolitan frontier. Until its decline in the 1970s this frontier was created by new technologies—electronic communications, automobiles and airplanes, synthetics, and petrochemicals—which transformed American life and American cities. "Each frontier," Elazar writes, "has created a new America with new opportunities, new patterns of settlement, new occupations, and new problems" (53). The central political problem of the cities in the 1960s was not simply to adapt to problems of growth and physical change brought about by the metropolitan frontier, but to accommodate to newness, population turnover, and transience as a way of life. This process, Elazar suggests, had largely run its course by the mid-1970s, when the metropolitan frontier was replaced by a new fourth frontier, which he designates as a "rurban," or citybelt cybernetic frontier consisting of belts of cities that form megalopolises, tied together by a cybernetically based communications network. By then Americans began to think of retrenchment rather than development. Whatever the particular manifestations of the frontier, however, Elazar believes the process he describes was basic to national, and urban, evolution.

Other important influences also shaped the cities. Patterns of migration were significant, particularly in their ethnic and religious composition. Ethnicity and religion emerged during these years to be a vital determinant of the political culture of the cities he examined. Successive generations of ethnic and racial groups formed the political culture of urban America. But, he argues, enormous diversity makes it difficult to generalize broadly about this process on a national scale. Political culture is a unique product of particular communities. As for federalism, he notes that the major problem for localities in the decade after 1961 was to adjust to federal mandates, especially in economic development and education. By the mid-1970s their problems changed. "When a new generation coincides with the beginnings of a new frontier stage," he declares, "the task of agenda building is even greater. The agenda for the new generation and the new frontier has yet to be defined" (160). That definition will be closely related to the state of America's medium-sized communities.

Elazar and his associates provide interesting observations about the development of medium-sized cities in the Middle West after 1950. Some readers might wish for greater clarity because the profusion of

themes and subthemes at times obscures the major trends developed in the book. But Elazar clearly has made thoughtful generalizations about city building and political culture in America's heartland, and his study places these in a broader context. The book will be of interest to political scientists, students of public administration, and historians.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

GERALD D. NASH

The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade, by Harvey Klehr. New York: Basic Books, 1984. xiv, 511 pp. Notes, index. \$26.50 cloth.

In *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*, Harvey Klehr, professor of political science at Emory University, succeeded in writing the definitive study of the Communist Party in the United States (CPUSA) during the depression decade of the 1930s. He has relied heavily on the Draper collection now housed at Emory University, FBI files obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (although of marginal value because of the way they have been organized), and numerous party publications, including the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*. Klehr believes the party's own publications provide the most authoritative sources because the party was quite open about how "its decisions were made and carried out" (xii). The Draper file contains oral interviews with important American Communists during the 1930s, including Earl Browder.

While Klehr's volume abounds in necessary detail, the central theme is simple: the CPUSA took its cue from Moscow. The cement that bound the party's most faithful members through a series of ideological shifts, oppression, and rejection was loyalty to the Soviet Union. As Italian Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti boasted, "one of the Soviet Union's strategic assets was that in the capitalist world 'millions of people are ready to fight for the defense of the Soviet Union with all their strength'" (416). However, many were not that steadfast and often could not tolerate the tortured labyrinths of Comintern directives, party factionalism, or the dreary inner life and burdens of being a party member. Thus, while the party recruited thousands, total membership remained small even during the halcyon days of the Popular Front.

Klehr also goes far beyond attention to party subservience to the Soviet Union; he focuses on accomplishments, decision making, impact on American life and institutions, social composition, and rationale for party actions. Although Klehr is critical and at times even con-

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